

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

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SUBJECT: POLICY STATEMENTS BY NEPAL'S KING BIRENDRA

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SUMMARY: DURING INTERVIEW WITH THREE FOREIGN NEWSMEN MARCH 1, KING BIRENDRA COMMENTED ON BROAD SPECTRUM OF FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC ISSUES. ALTHOUGH HIS REMARKS INTRODUCED FEW NEW THEMES, THEY WERE PLAYED DIFFERENTLY BY THREE MEDIA REPRESENTED AND ARE BEING TREATED DOMESTICALLY AS MAJOR POLICY PRONOUNCEMENTS. FACT THAT BIRENDRA INDIRECTLY REJECTED DIEGO GARCIA BASE SCHEME AND IMPLIED THAT NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION IS IN INTERESTS NOT OF ASIA BUT THE WEST IS NOTEWORTHY. END SUMMARY

1. KING BIRENDRA MARCH 1 GRANTED RELATIVELY UNIQUE JOINT INTERVIEW TO THREE FOREIGN NEWSMEN. NEW YORK TIMES MARCH 3 CARRIED BERNARD WEINRAUB ACCOUNT WHICH HIGHLIGHTED SUCCESS OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GON FOREIGN POLICY IN ATTRACTING FOREIGN ASSISTANCE (REFTEL A).

KULDIP NAYAR VERSION IN NEW DELHI STATESMAN MARCH 5 FOCUSED ON ALLEGED OFFER BY BIRENDRA TO MEDIATE BETWEEN GOI AND PRC (REFTEL B), WHILE ACCOUNT BY ASHOK VYAS IN DELHI MARCH 5 HINDUSTAN TIMES PLAYED UP RECENT IMPROVEMENTS IN GON-GOI RELATIONS.

2. SEMI-OFFICIAL VERNACULAR GORKHAPATRA AND ENGLISH-LANGUAGE RISING NEPAL MARCH 9 CARRIED MORE EXPANSIVE COMPANION PIECES WHICH DIFFERED FROM THREE FOREIGN REPORTS IN EMPHASIS AND

MADE NO REPEAT NO REFERENCE TO ROYAL OFFER TO MEDIATE SINO-INDIAN DIFFERENCES AS REPORTED BY STATESMAN. SUBSEQUENTLY RISING NEPAL EDITORIALY PRAISED KING FOR GRANTING INTERVIEW AND ON MARCH 12 FRONT-PAGED EXTENSIVE PORTIONS OF WEINRAUB ACCOUNT.

3. FOLLOWING ARE EXERPTS FROM SEMI-OFFICIAL VERSIONS. COMPLETE TEXT BY POUCH:

A. DOMESTIC POLICY: KING REPEATED FAMILIAR DEVELOPMENT THEMES AND SAID HIS OBJECT IS TO ACHIEVE REDISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH AND TO PROVIDE "FOOD, CLOTHES AND SHELTER FOR ALL NEPALESE." ON POSSIBLE CHANGES IN PANCHAYAT SYSTEM BIRENDRA REPORTEDLY SAID "THERE IS A LOT OF THINKING GOING ON...IF THE PEOPLE'S ASPIRATIONS CAN BE BETTER PUT FORWARD THERE ARE BASIC STEPS THAT WE WILL KEEP IN MIND...BUT WE DO NOT INTEND TO CHANGE THE BASIC FUNDAMENTALS OF THE SYSTEM." ASKED ABOUT A POSSIBLE CHANGING ROLE FOR THE MONARCHY BIRENDRA REPLIED: "I THINK AS TIME GOES ON THERE IS POSSIBILITY INSTEAD OF BEING AS ACTIVE AS I AM NOW, I CAN DEFINITELY CUT BACK AND THE MINISTERS AND THE GOVERNMENT CAN BECOME MORE ACTIVE." AS TO POLITICAL EXILES IN INDIA KING SAID "THEY THEMSELVES ARE NOT A FORCE THAT CAN REALLY EFFECTIVELY DO ANYTHING AGAINST NEPAL UNLESS THERE IS OUTSIDE BACKING." HE IMPLIED AMNESTY MIGHT BE GRANTED IF EXILES ABANDON "ARSON AND LOOTING" AND SINCERELY ASK TO BE RETURNED TO FOLD.

B. NARCOTICS: HIS MAJESTY REPORTEDLY COMMENTED ON EFFORTS TO CURB HASHISH CULTIVATION AND EFFECT DECLINE IN CONSUMPTION OF DRUGS WHICH HAS A MARKET "NOT IN ASIA BUT IN THE WEST."

C. INDO-NEPALESE RELATIONS: BIRENDRA BEGAN ON POSITIVE NOTE, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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STATING THAT INDO-NEPALESE RELATIONS "HAVE DEFINITELY IMPROVED" AND ARE "ON RIGHT PATH" TO "MATURE AND SOBER" STATUS. HOWEVER, IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS, HE RESURRECTED SKELETONS FROM PAST NOTING THAT INDIA HAD "BIG BROTHER" ATTITUDE AND REACTED IN MANNER "NOT AS EXPECTED" WHEN MAHENDRA ABOLISHED POLITICAL PARTY SYSTEM IN 1960. AVERAGE NEPALESE, BIRENDRA SAID "FEELS THAT WE HAVE BEEN CHEATED" ON PROJECTS SUCH AS KOSHI AND GANDAKI. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT "THESE FACTORS" SHOULD NOT INTERFERE

WITH KARNALI PROJECT, "KARNALI IS BENEFICIAL BOTH TO NEPAL AND INDIA, WE WANT TO GET THIS PROJECT GOING." AS TO COOPERATION ON OTHER THAN HYDEL PROJECTS HE SAID NEPAL MUST FIRST "CONSUME AND DIGEST" WHAT IT ALREADY HAS.

D. SINO-NEPALESE RELATIONS: OTHER THAN GENERAL STATEMENT THAT RELATIONS WITH GIANT NEIGHBORS ARE GOOD, BIRENDRA COMMENTED ONLY BRIEFLY ON SINO-NEPALESE RELATIONS. HE SAID STATE VISIT WAS "VERY MUCH OF A GOODWILL VISIT" AND THAT INDIA WAS NOT DISCUSSED BECAUSE RELATIONS ARE WITH CHINA, "WHY SHOULD INDIA PLAY A PART?"

E. DIEGO GARCIA: CONSTITUTING FIRST OFFICIAL COMMENT ON DIEGO GARCIA, BIRENDRA REPORTEDLY SAID "WE JUST DON'T WANT TENSION, ESPECIALLY IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD WHERE THE SITUATION CAN BE IGNITED; WE MUST TRY TO ERADICATE A SITUATION LIKE THIS."

4. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH BIRENDRA INTRODUCED FEW NEW THEMES IN HIS REMARKS, THE INTERVIEWS ARE BEING PLAYED LOCALLY AS MAJOR POLICY STATEMENTS, PERHAPS BECAUSE BIRENDRA SO SELDOM USES PRESS INTERVIEWS. IT MAY BE OF SOME SIGNIFICANCE THAT SEMI-OFFICIAL VERSIONS OF INTERVIEWS IMPLICITLY DENY STATESMAN ACCOUNT OF ROYAL OFFER TO MEDIATE BETWEEN GOI AND PRC BY OMITTING ALL REFERENCE TO IT (NOR WERE THEY REPORTED IN THE TIMES AND HINDUSTAN TIMES VERSIONS SEEN HERE). BIRENDRA'S SEEMINGLY UNNECESSARY REFERENCES TO BAD STATE OF INDO-NEPALESE RELATIONS IN PAST INDICATE HOW DEEPLY EVENTS OF EARLY 1960'S ARE STILL FELT. INDEED, AS REPORTED EARLIER (REFTEL B), WE UNDERSTAND INTERPRETIVE ARTICLE ON BIRENDRA BY STATESMAN'S NAYAR HAS BEEN SUPPRESSED LOCALLY AT LEAST IN PART FOR ITS ANALYSIS OF STATE OF INDO-NEPALESE RELATIONS. KING'S REFERENCES TO NARCOTICS MARKET NOT BEING IN ASIA BUT IN THE WEST REFLECT WIDELY HELD NEPALESE BELIEF THAT NARCOTICS USE POSES LITTLE THREAT TO NEPALESE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SOCIETY. COMMENTS ON DIEGO GARCIA THOUGH AMBIGUOUS WOULD SEEM TO BE EFFORT TO KEEP NEPAL BROADLY IN STEP WITH ITS NEIGHBORS AND FRIENDS IN THE REGION.
CARGO

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